



A Practical Approach to Cultural Insight

Colonel Casey Haskins, U.S. Army

THIS ARTICLE PROPOSES a simple model to help understand a culture—any culture. Though more than a checklist, it cannot substitute for detailed study of a language or cultural immersion. Neither will it provide any solutions. What it can do is provide the user with a way to think about a particular society, to help focus observations and actions. The object is to help the user figure out what things pose real problems and to provide insight on what solutions might work.

The past two decades have shown, especially since our involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq began, that we need some ability to understand and work with other cultures. Lack of understanding has led, at best, to frustration and setbacks, and, at worst, to tragedy. Examples are many and familiar. In 2004, a machine gunner in a Baghdad convoy shot at a car, killing its driver (a father) and wounding the passengers (members of his family) because of a simple cultural misunderstanding. The gunner had signaled the car to stop while the convoy passed. He used the common American arm signal: arm extended toward the driver, palm raised: “Halt!” Unfortunately, the terrified Iraqi driver, raised in a society that used European-style traffic signals, misunderstood the gunner to mean, “Proceed in the direction of my raised arm.” He did, with tragic results.¹

Other examples abound. Construction programs that cost hundreds of millions of dollars ended up not satisfying local needs (and in some instances creating further resentment).² Programs developed state institutions that seemed normal to Americans but were ill-suited to the local society.³

The need is plain enough, but practical methods for achieving cultural understanding seem to be lacking. The Army is currently looking for a better way of achieving “situational understanding.” The still-vague process called “Design” recognizes that understanding a situation takes time. We have already tried a variety of approaches. Doctrine has incorporated various aspects of culture, from adding the “C” (civil considerations) to the acronym METT-TC (mission, enemy, terrain, troops available, time, and now civil considerations); to adopting PMESII-PT (political, military, economic, social,

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PHOTO: U.S. Soldiers speak to Afghan elders during a civil affairs group patrol, July 2009. (DOD)

| Report Documentation Page | | | | Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188 | |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. | | | | | |
| 1. REPORT DATE SEP 2010 | | 2. REPORT TYPE | | 3. DATES COVERED 00-09-2010 to 00-10-2010 | |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE A Practical Approach to Cultural Insight | | | | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5b. GRANT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER | |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) | | | | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5e. TASK NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER | |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, Military Review, Truesdell Hall, 290 Stimson Ave., Unit 2, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 66027 | | | | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER | |
| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) | | | | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) | |
| | | | | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) | |
| 12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited | | | | | |
| 13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES | | | | | |
| 14. ABSTRACT | | | | | |
| 15. SUBJECT TERMS | | | | | |
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR) | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES 9 | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON |
| a. REPORT unclassified | b. ABSTRACT unclassified | c. THIS PAGE unclassified | | | |

infrastructure, information, physical environment, and time) as a framework for describing the operational environment; to flirting with the concept of “human terrain.” Recent doctrinal manuals are full of discussions of the need to understand and work within local cultures. Pre-deployment train-ups include cultural training, and training centers routinely emphasize it.

The military has tried various organizational changes (Joint Forces Command’s Operational Net Assessment teams, Training and Doctrine Command’s Culture Center, human terrain teams, and various and sundry cultural and political advisors). We have encouraged language training, developed cultural handbooks, and tried a variety of other approaches. As an Army, we have undoubtedly become more attuned to culture and seem to be more adept at working with it. Yet no one is satisfied. In a typical unit, two observations seem clear: its members vary widely in cultural ability, and experience is the best predictor of success. In other words, our Army’s greatest gains in cultural fluency have come the hard way, and we have no satisfactory system for passing that knowledge along.

Attempts to increase understanding have suffered from a number of problems. Some methods are too specific to one particular culture: good if the unit ends up deployed where that culture resides, but not so good when the unit goes other places. The culture in one part of Iraq differs greatly from that in other parts, but unit moves are common. A unit that prepares for Mosul and deploys to Afghanistan instead has an even bigger challenge—and this situation is not uncommon.

Some methods are helpful but too simplistic to be of widespread applicability. “SWEAT-MS” falls into this category. Security, water, electricity, academics, transportation, medical, and sanitation (to cite just one version of this evolving acronym) are all important considerations, but the acronym’s use as a checklist does not necessarily produce either insight or success. If a checklist leads to too narrow a focus, it can even cause important clues to be ignored.⁵

Indeed, a narrow interpretation and mechanical application can spoil the best of methods—and many of the methods in use are far from “best.” Predeployment cultural training is often scattershot, sometimes confusing. Lists of facts and statistics

with no coherent narrative often leave little impression and do not seem to produce a greater number of successful decisions.

Clearly, substantial language training followed by a cultural immersion experience should work, as it does for foreign area officers. Just as clearly, this is not feasible for a number of practical reasons, including the money it would cost, the time it would take, and our ability to predict accurately just which language and which culture we will need by training’s end.

The complex nature of societies makes this all the harder. There is no way to reduce a culture (which results from thousands or millions of people interacting with each other and with their environment over many years) into a simple checklist. Any attempt to do so is bound to disappoint. Even experts disagree. There is no widely accepted academic framework for analyzing a culture, let alone predicting how a policy will work out.⁶ Yet, we are expected to do exactly this.

To that end, I offer a framework I have found helpful in analyzing cultures, making plans, and informing decisions. It consists of two parts: a simplified model of society (copied from Professor Daniel Chirot) and a list of questions.⁷ The model is not intended to represent every nuance of reality; its usefulness comes largely from its simplicity and the essential insights it reveals. The purpose of the questions is to help channel observations. Answer them a little, and a little understanding will follow. Answer them some more, and a richer, more thorough understanding will result. The more completely one can answer them, the more one will grasp a particular society, not just foreign cultures, but subcultures everywhere (corporations, university departments, government agencies, international organizations, immigrant neighborhoods, hospitals, etc.). Therefore, the nearest big city can offer a useful training opportunity.

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The questions form a sort of “collection plan” for culture. They are not comprehensive because too many questions would be worse than too few. Many do not lend themselves to absolute answers because societies are too complex for that. They are not prioritized because it is impossible to know in advance what will matter most. Some are obvious, others less so, although I have found all of them useful at some point. Not all of them will be relevant in every situation. (Indeed, in some cases, the user may need to ask additional questions.) Nor will they reveal some magic solution to a problem. In fact, as was earlier stated, they will not lead to any solutions—only, hopefully, to a better understanding of the problems. Their use should also speed understanding and may help those with less experience start to understand a new culture.⁸

The Model

Chirot’s model of a society has four interrelated parts. The word “interrelated” is important here. It means if a change is made to one part, the other parts will change as a result. The boundaries between parts are not clear. In the real world, it is impossible to separate the economy from politics, or culture from institutions.⁹ They overlap. That doesn’t matter; the point is not to be comprehensive, but to gain understanding. Deliberate simplification should also help to avoid the fate of many good ideas—ever-increasing elaboration to make things more complete, leading in the end to too much detail to be useful.¹⁰

Part I: Political System. This is a conservative force, meaning that it resists change. The key questions are not about governmental structure or political parties or the apparatus of elections. Instead, this model aims at the essence:

- Who has power? It can be centralized or decentralized, formal or informal.
- How did they get it?
- How is it wielded?
- What is it used for?
- What are the checks on their power?

Part II: Economy. The economy is a neutral force, meaning that it neither promotes nor resists change. It is the place where the society interacts with its environment and where ideas meet the real world and are put to the test. In addition to being a testing ground, it is also a source of new ideas, and

a source of signals about what might be coming. The economy deserves its own list of questions to focus observations and develop understanding. (The battlefield shares many of these characteristics with the economy. Both are where reality tests ideas, where winners and losers have to deal with the results, and where we find clues about what might come next.)

Part III: Social institutions. These are collective structures—anything from the Boy Scouts to the central bank, to the school system, to the national police force, to a labor union, to a football league. A key property of institutions is that, while members come and go, the institution itself retains some recognizable character and consistent behavior.¹¹ Like politics, social institutions are a conservative force, in that they tend to resist change. Also like politics, the key aspect of social institutions is not their shape, number, or detail, but their function:

- They make rules.
- They enforce (or fail to enforce) those rules.
- They create processes (some significant, some trivial). This matters, because a common cause of failure in both organizations and societies is an ill-advised attempt to use old processes to do new things after circumstances change. It does not work. Old processes only do old things. Doing new things requires new processes.¹²
- They shape the way people cooperate.

Therefore, questions the user must ask about each institution are:

- What rules does this institution make, for whom, and with what authority?
- Does it enforce them? If so, how?
- What processes is it responsible for that affect people outside the institution itself? How significant are they? How flexible are they? How do they change?
- What effect does this institution have on the way people cooperate with each other?

Part IV: Culture. There is no established definition for culture. Here, we will define it simply as the values, ideas, and collective tastes that guide decisions. Culture is a neutral force: it neither promotes nor resists change, or rather, it sometimes does one, and sometimes the other.

What follows is a list of questions designed to give insight into the culture. The intent is not to judge what is better or what is worse. In fact, if the



David DeVoss USAID

Baharak Bazaar vegetable trader Faiz Mohammad (left) has enjoyed brisk sales since the completion of USAID's road-building campaign, 2009.

user passes too much moral judgment while observing and trying to understand, it will distort what he or she sees.¹³ Instead, the intent is to help the user figure out how things work and then to figure out what to do with that knowledge.

A note on the format: Many of the questions begin with two endpoints with a dash between them. The user must decide where to place a particular culture on the implied continuum between endpoints.

I have also provided clarifying comments in italics following the questions. Again, not all questions may be relevant in a given situation. Many are open-ended. They are not intended to be comprehensive. They simply provide a number of perspectives to help the user gain insights and understanding. There may not be a single definitive answer to a given question. Societies are complex and contain many tensions and contradictions.

Groups and Identity

- Individual—Collective. Where on this continuum? What groups?

- Identity (self, groups). How do they describe themselves? As Virginians? As Americans? As Baghdadis? As Iraqis? As Sunnis? As Shi'a? As members of a particular tribe?

- Social divisions. How stratified? How hierarchical? How rigid? *Class, race, religion, age, sex, caste, degree of servitude, occupation, region, etc.* What applies here and how does it work?

- Homogeneous Groups—Heterogeneous Groups. Are the people in a group more alike or more different?

- Rights for minorities. How strong? How well observed?

- Racism. Is there racism in the society? If so, how is it manifested?

- Family. How insular are families? *In some societies, the families are very private affairs rarely glimpsed by outsiders (and then only in tightly controlled circumstances). Other places, families are much more freewheeling, open, and even chaotic, with members and partial members coming and going.*

- How rigidly is family structure defined?

- What is the role of adult children?

- What is the role of parents in children's choice of spouse?

- What is the role of children in caring for elderly parents?

- Gender roles. How rigid are they?

- What are the roles of the elderly?

- Children. What are their proper roles? What happens to orphans?

- Social mobility. How likely is it that a son will end up in the same socio-economic place as his father, or a daughter as her mother?

- Physical mobility—tied to the land. *Americans tend to move to where jobs are. In many other places, it is unthinkable to leave the village of one's birth.* Where on the continuum is this society?

How Decisions are Made

- Tolerance. How much tolerance of uncertainty? *Some societies embrace risk and uncertainty. Others do not. Most would agree that America has shifted from a risk-taking society to a relatively risk-averse one, lawsuits being one illustration of that. Nevertheless, many would still see it as less risk-averse than in some Western European countries.* (In general, two types of society are likelier than average to be risk averse. Marginal societies [for instance those that are one bad harvest away from starvation] cannot afford to experiment because of the catastrophic cost of failure. Ironically, on the other end of the spectrum, societies that have experienced prolonged growth and success also tend to lose some of their appetite for risk. This is a by-product of the increasing bureaucratic controls they inevitably develop to handle the fruits of success. Those controls stifle agility, make it more difficult to take risks, and can lead people to believe they are no longer needed.)

- Confidence. When looking outward, do they see threat or opportunity?

- Openness to new ideas. Are they curious? Are new technologies seen more as a blessing or as a menace?

- Rules—Principles and Judgment. Do they tend to legislate and control by rules, regulations, and details, or do they try to agree on key principles and then empower officials to use their judgment in enforcing those principles, holding the officials accountable?

- Which rules matter?

- How closely does this conform to formal laws?

- How is this knowledge passed?

- Who gets to judge when rules are broken?

- Time—long-term and short-term. What are the typical time horizons people use in planning

their life activities? *Days? Seasons? Years? Generations?*

- How important is time in daily life? *Certain people live in tightly scheduled 10-minute increments. Others do not even own a watch. What is the norm here?*

- How strong is the sense of history? *Some societies seem to focus more on the past than on the future. Others have a strong historical sense but are forward looking. Still others seem to have very little sense of history.*

- How open is history to facts? *Every culture has its historical myths, some trivial (George Washington chopping the cherry tree) and some complex and laden with emotion (the rugged, individualist cowboy as the archetype American—he was, the evidence clearly shows, really a wage-earning corporate employee, often a racial minority, and never as important as portrayed).*¹⁴ How resistant to evidence are the myths?

- How do they see themselves in their history? *As victims? Triumphant? Both? Even the U.S. case is complicated. For instance, if you ask Americans to name two battles in the push westward of the frontier, most will pick the Alamo and Little Big Horn. Both these represent significant losses, in what was actually an almost unbroken series of victories.*¹⁵ *The Serbs commemorate as their most important historical event the Battle of Kosovo*



In just six months, Nawa, Afghanistan, residents went from collecting and carrying water every day to using clean, well-built communal taps near their homes. Children in Nawa fill their containers with fresh running water, 2009.



Widows in the Adraskan District of western Afghanistan voted to form an association to produce and market traditional wool carpets in a USAID funded project, 2009.

Polje, a disastrous defeat. The Australians annually celebrate ANZAC Day, commemorating their defeat at Gallipoli. Nevertheless, both the U.S. and Australia view themselves as overall victors rather than as victims. It's fair to say the Serbs see themselves mainly as victims. This can be complex.

- Problem solving. How do they approach problem solving?

- Big bang—Incremental. Is the tendency to try solving it all at once, or to work at it bit by bit over time?

- Need for crisis—a view of the future. Is a problem only solved when it becomes a crisis? Or is there a focused view of the future to prevent or minimize a problem? In other words, react—prevent.

- Inclusiveness—exclusiveness. *Open debate—smoke-filled rooms.* Who is involved in making important decisions?

- Consensus—Partisan rancor.

Key Ideas

- Fairness. How strong is the sense of fairness? How is “fairness” understood? *If this seems trivial, it's not. Seemingly similar cultures can differ fundamentally on what's “fair.”*

- Honor. How is “honor” defined? What is the importance of honor? What is the importance of

“face”? *The appearance and reputation of an individual varies by culture. In extreme cases, a significant loss of face can lead to suicide as the only honorable way out. In other societies, face is at most a minor consideration. How important is it here?*

- Win-win? Or only lose-lose? *The idea that two parties can make a deal and both end up better off is what makes markets possible. Yet, perhaps surprisingly, many societies do not extend the idea beyond narrow market transactions. Instead they see life as a zero-sum game, where the only way a person can come out ahead is by making someone else come out behind. In such a society, appealing to people by convincing them how much better off they'll be under a plan won't work. Instead, it may be necessary to persuade them that while they'll lose, the others will all lose more.*

- Willingness to compromise. *Like “win-win,” compromise may seem a universal idea. It's not. “A strong man has no need to compromise and a weak man can't.” Compromise is fundamental to democracy. Holding elections in a society without compromise won't lead to democratic government.*

- Human rights. Is there a belief that people are entitled to some fundamental, basic rights? If so, what are those rights? Are there people who aren't included? *This may seem contradictory, but it is*

actually quite common. For instance, throughout history many influential thinkers wrote passionately about liberty but kept slaves.

- Privacy. Is there an expectation of privacy? If so, what is included? How are violations handled?

- Property rights. (This really belongs in the “economy” questions but affects culture enough to include it here.) Can people buy and sell the land they occupy? Are intellectual property rights protected? How widespread is counterfeiting and patent infringement?

Social Norms

- Masculine—Feminine. Degree of masculinity of society. Where on the continuum is this society? Some societies display traits traditionally associated with femininity. For instance, Sweden values consensus, inclusiveness, nurturing all citizens, protection, etc. Pashtuns, on the other hand, are on the masculine end of the spectrum, prizing honor, self-reliance, toughness, independence, and justice.

- Is there a shared “middle-class dream”? If so, what is it?

- Celebrity. What makes one a celebrity? How are celebrities dealt with?

- Information and entertainment. How do people get news? What are popular forms of entertainment? How have they changed over the years and why?

- Expectations of hospitality. When a stranger appears, what treatment should he expect? What about a family member?

- Expected appearance of houses (yards). Is there an expectation of neatness? Of ostentation or of discreetness? Are houses visible or walled off from the street?

- How is trash and garbage disposed of?

- Attitude toward pollution. Does the sight of pollution irritate people?

- Readiness to believe conspiracy theories. *Most humans feel the appeal of conspiracy theories. In some societies, this is exaggerated to the point that people will reject visible truths out of hand, believing it must be more complex and more sinister than that.*

- Politeness. *These questions are not designed to give insight so much as to allow the user to move within the society with minimal friction.*

What behaviors are offensive? What behaviors are polite?

- Common facial and arm signals. *Learning to interpret these nonverbal communications is every bit as important as learning key phrases in the local language.*

Major Influences

- Education. Stories all children grow up with? Who goes to school? Do girls attend school? How far do they go? Who runs the schools? *Government? Church? Local communities? Others?*

- Rigidity of methods and measurements in schools. How tightly are teaching methods controlled? How uniform are they? What about tests? *Tests really matter. People everywhere will “train to the test.” Therefore, whatever is measured defines what is important.*

- Creativity valued and promoted? Or conformity?

- Belief in hard work or talent? Do parents and teachers believe that “some people just can’t do math” (most Americans), or that anyone can do math if they just work at it (most Asians)?

- Merit or circumstances of birth? What determines one’s place in school?

- Major subjects emphasized and omitted?

- Literacy?

- Religion. *The details of a particular religion probably matter less than understanding its effects:*

- Types/numbers of religions. *In Bosnia, for example, there are three: Orthodox Christians, Catholics, and Muslims. There used to be a small Jewish population too, but no more. While many people are not religious, there are no Protestant churches, let alone Buddhist temples. In California, by contrast, no one can keep count.*

- Degree of orthodoxy. How rigidly are the rules enforced? By whom?

- Tolerance?

- Degree of importance in daily life?

- Separation from other aspects of life?

- Do people control their own lives or is it divine or magical control?

- Driver of ethical behavior? *Do the religions form the basis for a code of ethical behavior, as do Christianity, Judaism, and Islam? Or is it not tied to an ethical code, like some forms of polytheism or*

ancestor worship? Or are they somewhere between, as with some forms of Buddhism?

- Trust and government.
 - How much do the people see the government as representative?
 - How much do the people trust government to be good?
 - How much do they trust other people to be good?
 - Reliance on self and family versus reliance on government?
- Corruption
 - Degree and type of corruption?
 - How much do ordinary people tolerate corruption and accept it as natural?
 - How much do they resent it?
- Welfare and wealth.
 - Wealth redistribution. *Does the government reapportion money from the well-off to the poor? Does someone else (church, etc.)?*
 - How much inequality is acceptable? *Societies vary widely in how much they accept vast disparities in income, power, privileges, etc. What is the case here?*
 - How does inheritance work? Who inherits what?
 - How are the poor treated?
 - What happens when someone gets sick or injured?



Abdul Al Asoum, an advisor with the PRT, and a local farmer look at crops that survived a snow storm and freeze because of plastic protection provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development, Taji, Iraq, 2009.

Social Interaction

- Community involvement.
 - Professed? *How much do people say they participate in the community?*
 - Actual? *How much do they really contribute? Who helps feed the poor? Who helps raise a barn? Who tends a village monument? Who cares for common areas?*
 - National service? *Is there a draft or something similar? Is service expected?*
 - Participation in emergency services? *Who fights fires?*
 - Loyalty to employer?
- Language. Is there a common language? How are nonspeakers treated? What do people speak at home?
 - Frankness. *How direct is spoken communication? Do they tend to come right out and say what is on their minds or do they talk around it in the name of politeness? How big a role does nonverbal communication play?*
 - Force for common identity or for separateness? *(In Bosnia, there is one language—everyone can easily understand everyone else—but the three groups each insist that theirs is different, that there are really three distinct languages. [In 50 to 100 years, they will probably succeed in making it so.] In China, by contrast, there are at least eight major, distinct languages, each with many dialects. Yet because they share a system for writing, the government is able to insist that the country shares one language.)*
- Art. What are the major art forms?
 - How widespread is participation? *Does everyone sing and draw and dance? Or only a talented elite?*
 - Public art. *How common? What kinds?*
 - Literary traditions?
 - Major subjects? *What is the art about?*
- What's important?
 - How important do people see art in their lives?
 - Music?

Some Observations

Answering these questions is not something that can be done overnight. Many may take weeks or months, and answers to some of the more obscure questions may continue to be refined over years.

Fuller answers tend also to come from groups of people engaged in debate than from single individuals. “What does the evidence mean? Why do you think that? What have you observed that points in that direction? Well, then, what about this?”

Commanders might find it useful to have an occasional session with key advisors to work through the model and see what level of consensus they have and how deeply they think they understand the answers to each question. This can be tied to a “so what?” review of their campaign plan, or to an assessment of metrics for progress (including a look at whether the metrics are really measuring the right things), but it need not be formally tied to anything. The questions can stand alone. The mere act of asking and answering them will shape the way users think about the society and the way they look at it, thus influencing everything they do. It will also cause the participants to reach consensus, to share a more

explicit and more detailed view of the society than they otherwise would.

Of course, answering these questions, even answering them thoroughly, will not solve the problem of how to work successfully within a given culture. It may not even be clear which answers are most important. Neither questions nor answers can substitute for judgment. If turned into nothing more than a checklist, the model can quickly become just another administrative burden, one of many “synchronization” tools that form a headquarters’ daily task list. However, used properly to focus observation and analysis, the model will certainly inform judgment, adding color and nuance. Time and effort devoted to getting answers will pay off in increased chances of being able to predict how an action will unfold. It will thus help the users to develop solutions with a higher probability of succeeding and a lower probability of doing harm. **MR**

NOTES

1. The author was present.

2. An example of this is the initial “reconstruction” effort in Iraq, begun by the Coalition Provisional Authority and CJTF-7 in 2003-2004. It focused on building water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants, and electrical generation plants (the only three options, in order to keep the design process simple), many of which were poorly conceived, and some of which never ended up working. In one memorable instance, a water treatment plant, constructed in a Sunni town with very high unemployment, was built entirely by outsiders from the contractor’s tribe. For several months, the outsiders tore up the town streets, spent money that caused local inflation, and behaved in ways the townspeople found jarring. They left when the project was “complete”—but the roads were still a mess, the economy was in shambles, there was no immediate prospect of jobs at the plant, and worst of all, there were no pipes connecting anyone’s house to the plant. No local citizen could turn on a tap and drink safe, clean water. The results were not the hoped-for improvement. The author was present.

3. A good example is the Federation Army in Bosnia, the organization and training of which was led by MPRI, under an American government contract. When U.S. subsidies to support the Federation Army ended late in 2003, the whole apparatus became unaffordable and was seen by Bosnians as unworkable. Much of the army began quietly rusting away. The author was present.

4. Research suggests that the evidence is mixed for using prior experience as a predictor of future success at coping with cultural differences. It may be just that those with more experience here also have more experience in other areas which help. See Allison Abbe, Lisa M.V. Gulick, and Jeffrey L. Herman, “Cross-Cultural Competence in Army Leaders: A Conceptual and Empirical Foundation.” Study Report 2008-01, United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (October 2007), 9-10.

5. Dr. Marcus Griffin, who served as one of the first members of a human terrain team, described several incidents where this happened. Interview with author, 23 February 2009.

6. Abbe, Gulick, and Herman, 2007.

7. Daniel Chiro, *How Societies Change* (Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 1994). In this excellent book, Chiro credits Talcott Parsons with developing the original model on which his is based.

8. The reader with experience in the field of sociology will notice that the questions and the model include all five of Geert Hofstede’s cultural index dimensions—individual vs. collective (IDV), power distance index (PDI), uncertainty avoidance

index (UAI), masculinity (MAS), and long-term orientation (LTO). However, while Hofstede’s index is quite helpful in *classifying* societies, it is less than adequate in *understanding* how a particular culture works. Geert Hofstede, *Culture’s Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1980).

9. Douglass North, “Institutional Change: A Framework of Analysis” in Braybrooke (Ed.) *Social Rules*, 1996, 189-200. North, a Nobel-laureate economist, advocates ending their current separation as fields of study and creating instead a new discipline of “political economics.” See also Chiro, 118.

10. This phenomenon is sometimes jokingly referred to as “the Christmas Tree Disease.” When someone notices a bare patch in the tree’s branches, he covers it up with ornaments—but then that leads to too many ornaments in that spot, which must be balanced by more ornaments elsewhere. Soon the tree sags dangerously, and if the process is not stopped, the tree topples. Examples abound. Three were already mentioned. METT (mission, enemy, terrain, and troops available) became METT-T (with the addition of “time”) and then METT-TC (with the addition of “civil considerations”). Joint Forces Command developed PMESII (political, military, economy, social, infrastructure, and information) as a framework for analyzing an operational situation. Shortly afterward, the Army added –PT (physical environment and time). The Civil Affairs acronym SWET (sewage, water, electricity, and telecommunications) kept expanding; the most common current form is SWEAT-MS (security, water, electricity, academics, transportation, medical, and sanitation (which includes sewage and trash disposal)). While it is true that models are incomplete, we often lose sight of the fact that a model’s usefulness can stem as much from what it omits as what it includes.

11. Joshua M. Epstein and Robert Axtell, *Growing Artificial Societies* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1996), 172. The authors provide superb explanations and illustrations of how these durable characteristics result from interactions of individuals in the context of the institution’s rules.

12. Clayton Christensen, *The Innovator’s Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press, 1997), 175.

13. For instance, see Stephen Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: Norton, 1997), 313.

14. Historian Richard White made this point in an interview with Roger Mudd. Roger Mudd and Richard White, *Great Minds of History*, History Channel documentary, 1999.

15. Ibid.